



Washington State Department of Agriculture

News Release

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WSDA offers growers, farm supervisors, ag employees pesticide safety training

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) is offering classes in February and March to enhance pesticide-use safety for agricultural workers under the department's Farmworker Education Program. "Train the Trainer" classes help growers and their farm supervisors understand state and federal pesticide safety standards and provides them with training tips, techniques and experience. A second type of class, the "Hands-on Handler" training, is designed to help agricultural employees who mix, load or apply pesticides learn safe workplace practices.

"Agricultural employers must provide their employees who work around pesticides with the protections required under the state and federal Worker Protection Standard (WPS)," said Margaret Tucker, certification and training manager for WSDA.

WPS protections include notifying employees about where and when pesticides are applied, providing personal protective equipment and decontamination supplies, and ensuring that they have received pesticide safety training. In Washington, WPS is jointly enforced by WSDA and the state Department of Labor & Industries.

WSDA has provided pesticide safety training to more than 15,000 farmworkers in both Spanish and English, depending on the audience.

The Train the Trainer classes help growers, farm supervisors and foremen understand their obligations under the WPS. The day-long classes cover pesticide basics, interactive training methodology, training regulations and a step-by-step process for conducting effective pesticide training programs.

They will be offered in Pasco on Feb. 14, Toppenish on Feb. 28, and Omak on March 20.

"Reports from the Moses Lake Train the Trainer class held last month were positive," said Ofelio Borges, WSDA's WPS training specialist. "The class even had repeat participants attending because they wanted to improve their training skills."

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The Hands-on Handler classes help pesticide handlers learn about personal protective equipment, mixing and loading, environmental protection, cleanup and disposal, and health issues associated with pesticide work. The training qualifies participants for a WPS handler training verification card.

Course locations include the Tri-Cities area on Feb. 21, Royal City on March 6, Wenatchee on March 13 and Brewster on March 27. Both programs use an interactive approach, include hands-on exercises and qualify for pesticide license recertification credits.

“We really appreciate the efforts of WSU’s Grant-Adams Area Extension office for its support of the handler training classes,” Tucker noted. Among the organizations assisting WSDA in its farmworker education and WPS efforts are Washington State University, the Washington State Farm Bureau, Washington Association of Wine Grape Growers, Columbia Basin Tree Fruit Society and the Washington Growers Clearinghouse. Past sponsors include the Washington Growers League and Wenatchee Valley College. The Train-the-Trainer classes will be sponsored in part by the Yakama Nation, Wenatchee Valley College and the Moses Lake Migrant Care Center.

To learn more about the training programs and to view schedules for the 2004 courses, go to <http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/LicensingEd/FarmworkerEducation.htm#CurrentCourses>. To register for either the Train the Trainer or the Hands-on Handler programs, contact Veronica Segura in Yakima at (509) 225-2639.

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